

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A wafer processing apparatus including a mini-environment portion having a chamber including a chamber wall therein and configured to transfer a wafer between a clean box having a housing with an opening configured to be closed by a lid to house the wafer in the housing and the chamber, wherein the housing has a [[tab]] flange extending ~~outside~~ from the opening of the clean box toward a side opposite to the opening in a surface-plane direction of the opening of the clean box around an entire perimeter of the opening of the clean box, said apparatus comprising:

a first opening portion formed on [[a]] the chamber wall ~~of the chamber~~, for communicating with an outside of the chamber, ~~the wall opposing said first opening portion~~ facing the opening of the clean box which allows loading or unloading the wafer between the clean box and the chamber,

wherein when the wafer transferring operation is performed, the clean box is fixed to overlap the [[tab]] flange of the clean box over an outside surface of the wall on which the first opening portion is formed with a first clearance formed around the entire perimeter of said first opening portion, the first clearance being defined by a predetermined constant distance along an entire perimeter of the opening of the clean box between a surface of the flange and the outside surface of the chamber wall on which the first opening portion is formed

wherein the clean box is ~~set so as to position an inside~~ settable in a manner where an outermost peripheral edge of the tab inside an area within a peripheral edge of said first opening portion opening of the clean box is positioned closer to a center of said first opening portion in a direction parallel to a plane of the chamber wall than a peripheral edge of said first opening portion in the direction parallel to the plane of the chamber wall so that a part of

an airflow from the inside of the chamber at the peripheral edge of said first opening portion in a direction normal to said first opening portion directly hits ~~[[the]]~~ a chamber side surface of the ~~[[tab]]~~ flange to ~~change direct~~ an airflow ~~from the inside of the chamber to an airflow~~ along in the direction along the surface of the tab chamber wall ~~[[,]]~~

~~and wherein the first clearance is defined by a predetermined constant distance along an entire perimeter of the opening of the clean box between a surface of the tab and the outside surface of the wall on which the first opening portion is formed.~~

Claim 2 (Previously Presented): A wafer processing apparatus according to claim 1, comprising a door capable of closing said first opening portion when the wafer is not transferred and opening the first opening portion when the wafer is transferred, wherein when the lid held by the door has been inserted into said first opening portion to close said first opening portion until the door has closed said first opening portion, a second clearance is formed between the door and a perimeter of said first opening portion, the second clearance communicating with the first clearance,

wherein an inside of the chamber is capable of communicating with an outside of the chamber through the first and second clearances.

Claim 3 (Previously Presented): A wafer processing apparatus according to claim 2, wherein said second clearance is capable of communicating with the first clearance to form a gas flow path from the chamber to the outside of the chamber.

Claim 4 (Currently Amended): A wafer processing apparatus including a mini-environment portion having a chamber therein and configured to transfer a wafer between a clean box having a housing with an opening configured to be closed by a lid to house the

wafer in the housing and the chamber, wherein the housing has a ~~[[tab]]~~ flange extending ~~outside~~ from the opening of the clean box toward a side opposite to the opening in a surface plane direction of the opening of the clean box around an entire perimeter of the opening of the clean box, said apparatus comprising:

a first opening portion formed on a wall of the chamber, for communicating with an outside of the chamber, the wall opposing to the opening of the clean box which allows loading or unloading the wafer between the clean box and the chamber; and

a door configured to close said first opening portion when the wafer is not transferred and opening the first opening portion when the wafer is transferred,

wherein when the wafer transferring operation is performed, the clean box is fixed to overlap the ~~[[tab]]~~ flange of the clean box ~~[[with]]~~ over an outside surface of the wall on which the first opening portion is formed with a first clearance formed at the perimeter of said first opening portion, the first clearance being defined by a predetermined constant distance along an entire perimeter of the opening of the clean box between a surface of the flange and the outside surface of the chamber wall on which the first opening portion is formed,

wherein the clean box is ~~set so as to position an inside~~ settable in a manner where an outermost peripheral edge of the ~~tab inside an area within a peripheral edge of said first opening portion~~ opening of the clean box is positioned closer to a center of said first opening portion in a direction parallel to a plane of the chamber wall than a peripheral edge of said first opening portion in the direction parallel to the plane of the chamber wall so that a part of airflow from the inside of the chamber at the peripheral edge of said first opening portion in a direction normal to said first opening portion directly hits ~~[[the]]~~ a chamber side surface of the ~~[[tab]]~~ flange to ~~change direct~~ change an airflow ~~from the inside of the chamber to an airflow along in the direction along the surface of the tab~~ chamber wall;

~~wherein the first clearance is defined by a predetermined constant distance along an entire perimeter of the opening of the clean box between a surface of the tab and the outside surface of the wall on which the first opening portion is formed;~~

wherein when the lid held by the door has been inserted into said first opening portion to close said first opening portion until the door has closed said first opening portion, a second clearance is formed between the door and a perimeter of said first opening portion, the second clearance communicating with the first clearance,

and wherein an inside of the chamber is capable of communicating with an outside of the chamber through the first and second clearances.

Claim 5 (Previously Presented): A wafer processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the first clearance extends between the tab and the wall on which said first opening portion is formed in a direction of the wall on which said first opening portion is formed.

Claim 6 (Previously Presented): A wafer processing apparatus according to claim 4, wherein the first clearance extends in a direction perpendicular to the wall on which the first opening portion is formed.

Claims 7-8 (Canceled).

Claim 9 (Previously Presented): A wafer processing apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the second clearance extends within said first opening portion around an entire perimeter of said first opening portion along a direction in which said door opens.

Claim 10 (Previously Presented): A wafer processing apparatus according to claim 4, wherein the second clearance extends within said first opening portion around an entire perimeter of said first opening portion along a direction in which said door opens.

Claim 11 (New): A wafer processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein an outermost dimension of the first opening portion, in a vertical direction, is greater than an outermost dimension of the opening of the clean box, in the vertical direction.

Claim 12 (New): A wafer processing apparatus according to claim 4, wherein an outermost dimension of the first opening portion, in a vertical direction, is greater than an outermost dimension of the opening of the clean box, in the vertical direction.